



*Historical*

ON  
THE USEFULNESS OF THE MEDICAL  
PROFESSION,  
BEYOND THE LIMITS OF THE PROFESSION.

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A  
LECTURE INTRODUCTORY  
TO THE  
COURSE OF PRACTICE OF MEDICINE  
IN  
JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE  
OF PHILADELPHIA,

DELIVERED NOVEMBER 4, 1842.

BY J. K. MITCHELL, A.M. M.D.

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PUBLISHED BY THE CLASS.

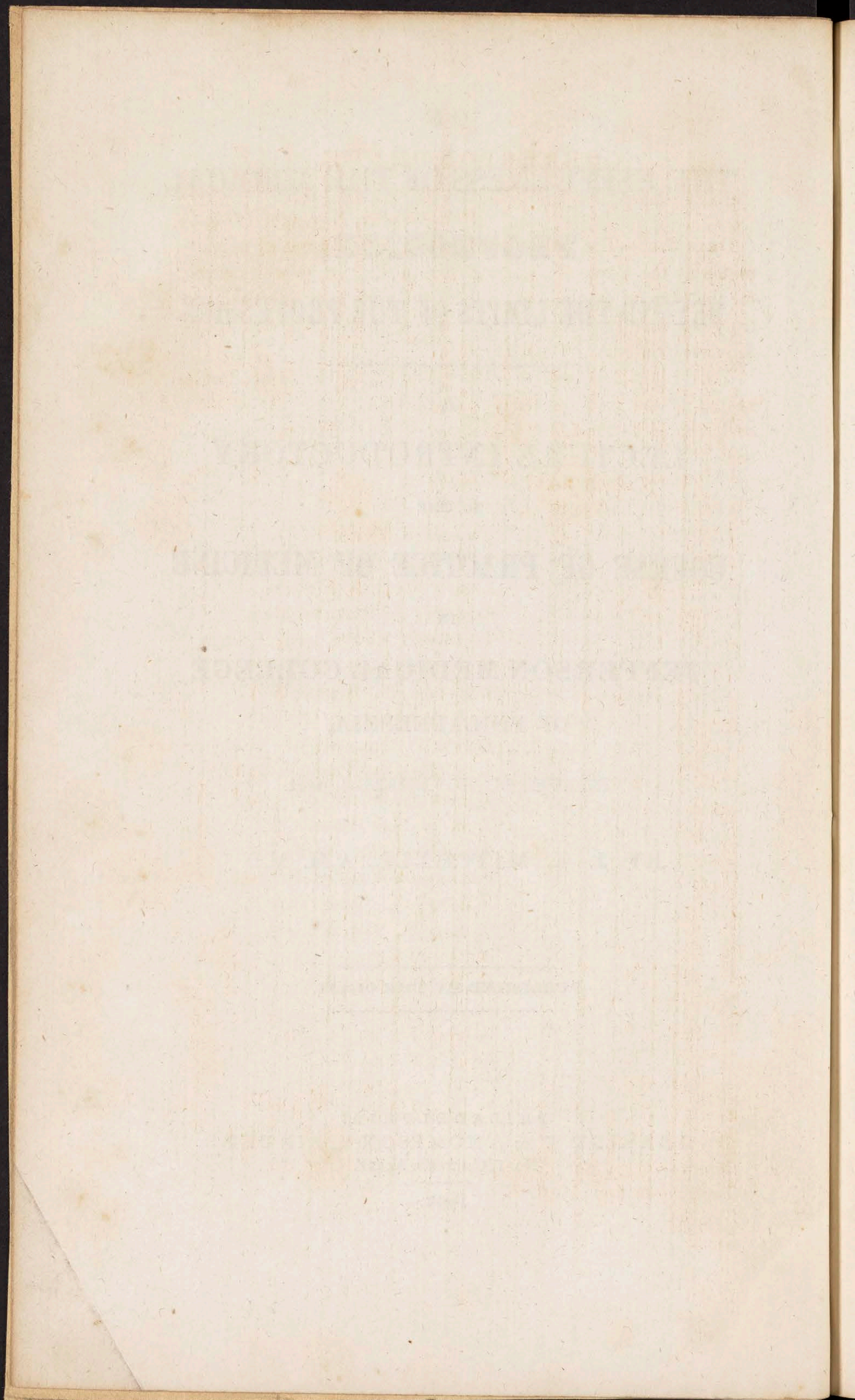
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PHILADELPHIA:  
MERRIHEW & THOMPSON, PRINTERS,  
No. 7 CARTER'S ALLEY.

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1842.







## CORRESPONDENCE.

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*Philadelphia, Nov. 9th, 1842.*

DEAR SIR,—The undersigned having been appointed a committee by the Class of Jefferson Medical College, to wait on you for the purpose of obtaining a copy of your very valuable, and truly eloquent Introductory Lecture, for publication, do respectfully solicit a copy for that purpose.

Your compliance will ever be esteemed by the Committee a source of the most pleasing remembrance, and will be duly reciprocated by the Class whom they have the honour to represent.

Very respectfully, we remain  
Yours' truly,

THOMAS K. PRICE, of Va.  
J. D. ROBISON, Ohio.  
LEWIS PAULLIN, Florida.  
CHARLES A. PHELPS, Mass.  
T. DUPUY MONTEGRIER, France.  
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T. H. PAYNE, Miss.  
GEO. W. EWELL, Tenn.  
J. VON BRITTON, St. Thomas.  
J. C. NEVES, Montevideo.

To Professor J. K. Mitchell.



*Philadelphia, Nov. 11th, 1842.*

GENTLEMEN,—I have the honor to receive your very kind note of yesterday, requesting for publication the Introductory Lecture which I had the pleasure of delivering before the Class of the Jefferson Medical College. It is at your service, and will be delivered to you at such time as may suit your convenience.

With sincere and respectful wishes for the prosperity of the Class you represent, and for each member of the Committee,

I have the honor to be, gentlemen,

Faithfully yours,

J. K. MITCHELL.

*To Messrs. Thomas K. Price, &c. &c. Committee.*



## INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN of the class, members of the faculty of medicine, I propose to myself this evening the agreeable task of proclaiming the importance and usefulness of the medical profession, beyond the limits of its mere professional duties.

It is not unimportant to you, students of medicine, to know how much of extrinsic honour and usefulness, incidentally presents itself, to diversify and illumine the often dreary pathway of professional labour. It is to those who have just seized the pilgrim's staff, and just tightened the pilgrim's girdle, some encouragement to believe, that the long vista of probational trial and sacrifice which bursts upon the view, is richly studded with the flowers of philosophy, and the fruits of wisdom; inviting the young aspirant for fame and service, to gather as he advances, wreaths such as battle cannot give, and a harvest such as a Franklin would covet.

Of all the professions and pursuits of life, that of medicine demands, in its ordinary preparation, the greatest extent and variety of knowledge. If the "know thyself" of the Grecian sage have any value, it is only the physician who can claim its entire possession. He it is, who, after making himself master of the corporeal self, inquires with adequate physical preparation into the mental self, so exclusively honoured in the Grecian adage. It is not possible for one who has not stored his mind with the anatomical and physiological knowledge of the brain and nervous system, so complicated and so obscure, to enter with any reasonable prospect of success on the observation of the moral and intellectual phenomena which form the noblest study of mankind. It is only therefore to physicians that society must finally look for such a theory of mind as will prove acceptable and enduring, by resting on the basis of the most extended observation. While



I do not believe that mind emanates from matter, or that it is material itself, I am bound by indubitable and ever-present evidence to admit, that the ethereal part of our nature is strangely and constantly under the influence of the grosser particles of our structure, and that a thorough knowledge of the latter becomes thereby indispensable to any sound comprehension of the former. For this reason physicians make the best metaphysicians, and moral philosophy owes to their labours, directly and indirectly, its most important achievements. Phrenology is indebted both for its inception and progress to the genius and labours of physicians. While I do not give entire assent to the *details* of that most modern of sciences, I must indulge in the belief that, since it has been systematically cultivated, moral philosophy has been indebted to it for rich researches, vast acquisitions, wholesome correctives, and an exactness strongly contrasted with the loose method of the older school. Whatever may be the final fate of phrenology, no one can now deny that a thorough knowledge of its present state is indispensable to the student of moral philosophy. Metaphysics, the last of the sciences to adopt the inductive and experimental methods, by which the sister studies were so prodigiously advanced, was forced from its abstractions by the hand of phrenology, and brought down to the basis of observation, experiment and induction. And this boon to the loftiest of human pursuits, the study of self, came from the domain of medicine, from the labours of physicians. Did I not mean to avoid, as far as possible, the introduction of exclusively medical topics, I might show also how absurd must be any systematic attempt to treat of mind, without studying attentively its manifestations under the influence both of physical and mental disorders. If only for this reason, moral philosophy must lean as a science on the arm of medicine; and physicians on the other hand must not neglect the metaphysical studies which enlighten them in some of the most interesting yet obscure departments of the healing art.

Perhaps nothing more agreeably distinguishes the age



in which we live, than the highly refined state of *Natural History*. The ceaseless activity of commerce, carries vast numbers of ships to every accessible spot of the habitable globe, and the natural products of every region are heaped together at the great centres of trade. The facilities of internal communication by steamers, locomotives, and public roads, open up, for the enterprise of travellers, the distant recesses of great continents from which are brought to the same *foci* the curiosities of unexplored nature. The refinements in the arts of design and of pictorial representation, enable the cultivators of natural history to present to the world the almost living images of these accumulated riches, at a very inconsiderable expense. Hence, natural history has become one of the most affluent of scientific departments. Our own country has not been a laggard in this agreeable and useful pursuit; and here, as elsewhere, the cultivators of medicine have been among the most zealous and successful of its votaries. Few, even of our interior and even remote towns, nay, of rural districts, fails to boast of its physician, who finds, amidst his gloomy and fatiguing professional duties, some hours to devote to the invigoration of this tree of knowledge. In our larger cities physicians are the chief labourers, and for the obvious reason, that while their professional studies give them a taste for the investigation of nature, they afford them many facilities denied to the students of other avocations. They are accustomed to observe, experiment, describe. They have, in the study of the human frame, and of comparative anatomy, a starting point of the utmost importance; and the preparations, healthy and morbid, made in the dissecting room, well fit them for the handywork, so essential to the successful prosecution of natural history. If we look around for the evidence of the productiveness of these prelude studies, we find them in every association for the promotion of natural history, and in most of the works, which on this subject have done honour to the country. Go with me in idea, gentlemen, to the Hall of the



Academy of Natural Sciences. On the table before you lie the many memoirs of my New York namesake, Dr. Samuel L. Mitchell. Here is Dr. Hosack's learned work, the *Hortus Elginensis*. There lie the emblazoned labours of Dr. Say, on Entomology and Conchology; and the huge and well written volume of Harlan, on various topics connected with natural history. Here is the graceful natural history of Goodman; and the learned works and memoirs, on kindred subjects, of Morton, of Warren, of Holbrooke, of Jacob Green, of Darlington, Baldwin, Blodgett, J. R. Coxe, Hildreth, and Beck; of Dekay, Gray, Torry, Drake, McMurtrie, Harris, and Horsfield; of Pickering, Hays, B. S. Barton, William P. C. Barton, Bruce, Jay, and Mease; of Sharpless, Troost, Van Rensselaer, Waterhouse, Ducatel, Gibbons, and a host of others, the bare enumeration of whom would make of itself a long catalogue. Look in at the meeting of the Academy of Natural Sciences, in Broad street, and you find our friend, Dr. Morton, in the chair, listening, after a day of professional toil, to some observations on botany, by that able naturalist, and copious writer, Dr. William P. C. Barton. A debate arises. The speakers are, almost all, physicians. Among them are Dr. Pickering, Dr. Carson, Dr. Griffith, Dr. Watson, Dr. Zantzinger.

A new subject is presented by Dr. Bryan, who offers specimens of mineralogy with remarks, and he is followed by Dr. Blanding, Dr. Burrough, Dr. Chaloner, Dr. McEwen, Dr. William Wetherill, and others.

Who is that self-possessed speaker, who seems almost to riot in the satisfaction of presenting to the Academy a beautiful novelty in zoology? It is Dr. McMurtrie. He finishes his lucid description, and the Academy listens to incidental, but able, remarks from Dr. Hays, Dr. Hallowell, and Dr. Bridges.

Subject after subject arises, and still the principal speakers are men well known for great professional attainments, and for the diligent pursuit of practical medicine. I can count for you, at a full meeting, forty-five Doctors, each one



of whom has studied, as a "speciality," some interesting section of natural knowledge. He has finished his professional labours for the day, and comes in the evening to refresh himself at the sweet fountain of nature, or to convey to his esteemed associates, some new specimen, or newer idea. His family and his community demand his day, but he owes also something to the honour and utility of the country, and here he satisfies at once his taste and his patriotism.

I do not desire, my young friends, to seduce you from the path of professional duty, to other and more alluring pursuits; but I wish to show you that, even amidst the severest toils of common business, leisure is found by distinguished physicians for other employments; which, if they do not enrich them, at least promote their health, their honour, and their cheerfulness. I scarcely ever saw a professional man who made of himself a mere business hack, who was either happy or agreeable; such men become usually prematurely old, and, on the whole do, even in the line of their business, less for society than those who mingle judiciously in pursuits of a less absorbing character. I have also observed that the confinement of the attention to a single subject, obtunds the faculties, and reduces a physician down to the level of a mere routinist. Diversified employments enliven the mind, and invigorate the body. Men so occupied enlarge, not only the perceptive and reflective faculties, but they widen also the chances of discovery, and lessen the hazard of running into wild and chimerical speculations.

It has been said that the best guardians and trustees for others, are those who are most busily occupied with their own affairs; and that he who gives to one kind of charity, is ever most ready to contribute to others. It is equally true, that they who compose medical works, are the persons most likely to add to the stock of common literature, and that the physicians who write beyond the limits of the profession, are foremost to aid in enriching the professional domain itself.



It matters little where the young author begins his flight, in or out of his proper sphere. He will soon find an *ether* congenial to his wing, and visit the known fields of truth, or cleave the third heaven of invention. But if he fly not at all, he must circulate for ever in the same narrow pathway, the dull routine of cash and prejudice.

Chemistry, always a chosen handmaid of medicine, has been carefully cultivated by physicians. In its infancy, in the seventeenth century, it was their almost exclusive domain. Few names of that peculiar period figured in chemistry, without being also distinguished in medicine. It is true that our speculative progenitors indulged excessive ideas of the importance of the new art to their profession ; but they threw into the lap of medicine, so rapidly and profusely, such brilliant gems, as to justify them in enlarged and sanguine expectations of limitless good. By degrees, however, the contributions ceased, and chemistry, still a favourite of the physician, was misdirected to the explanation of medical theories, when she herself was scarcely advanced beyond the dignity of an art, and could not claim the title of a science. The destruction of the chemical school of medicine, carried with it the auxiliary; and chemistry fell into so much disrepute in the halls of medical philosophy, as to be considered an almost useless appendage of a physician's education. The refinements of analysis, by which some twenty years ago, the chemist was able to present to her old associate, quinia, morphia, and a host of invaluable simplifications, drew chemistry once more into the sanctuary of medicine. That period marked the birth of organic analysis, and introduced the quantitative and atomic estimates, by which chemistry promises to do for the healing art more than her early votaries in their wildest enthusiasm, dared to hope. The recent work of Liebig, devoted to chemistry as applied to physiology, shows the unexpected mass of materials collected by that science for a medical structure. To borrow a happy illustration of that eminent author, the curves of human knowledge, which, because of our limited intelligence, we



are compelled to follow, intersect, only at points, the straight lines of truth. When science puts forth her best efforts, these points of intersection increase in number and value. It is thus that quantitative and atomic analyses have multiplied greatly the points of contact of organic chemistry with physiology, and made more imperatively necessary the chemical education of the physician. But such are the interlacings of the modern sciences, as their circles enlarge before us, that the points of intersection of these chemical curves, with many extra-professional lines of truth, give for social purposes an enhanced value to the acquirement. It is thus, that as the physician fits himself for the duties of his vocation, he becomes, every succeeding year, more important to society, beyond the limits of his profession. That is a ratio, which, because of the indefinite nature of truth, and the closer approximation of the departments of progressive science, must, like the fame of Washington, or the benefaction of Fulton, know an endless enlargement.

Such being the importance of chemistry to the proper comprehension and practice of medicine, the physician who shall hereafter avow his ignorance of its principles, must be placed in the degraded position of a surgeon who should confess his want of knowledge of anatomy. In our own country, I have no reason to entertain any fear of a professional deficiency in this important particular. In all, or nearly all, our medical schools, chemistry is carefully taught, and by medical men: while, in many other institutions of learning, we see the M. D. subjoined to the names of the professors of the same art. Rush, and Wistar, and Parrish, and Woodhouse, and Coxe, and Jones, and Cooper, have lectured on chemistry, in Philadelphia. Your professor of that branch, in this school, is a practitioner of medicine, whose summer clinic within these walls, amply attests to you his medical qualifications. His worthy pupil, Dr. Bridges, fills the same responsible station, at the College of Pharmacy. Dr. Torrey lectures at New York and Princeton; Dr. T. D. Mitchell at Louisville; Dr. Webster at Cambridge; Dr. Robert Rodgers



at the University of Virginia; Dr. Ravenelle at Charleston; and Dr. Peters at Lexington. Besides these, medical men, in many an unpretending town and village, gratify the audiences of their little lyceums with discourses and experiments, such as a Davy or a Hare, would delight to witness. Deduct from the chemical knowledge of the country its medical share, and there would be left a few bright names, but the mighty aggregate would dwindle to a scanty quantity.

Who is there among you, who will not find himself at a loss for the useful comprehension of many a physiological truth, unless he borrow a light from the halls of natural or mechanical philosophy? The movements of bones are the motions of levers, the circulation of the blood is, in part, a hydraulic problem, optics explain the apparatus of vision, and acoustics teach us the value of the mechanism of hearing. Gravitation is ever at work to aid, or to thwart the surgeon; and I have seen an operator, usually dexterous enough, sorely perplexed to manage a compound pulley. Not only thus, but in a thousand modes, the science of the mechanicians becomes the handmaiden of the physician. But it is scarcely possible for the student of medicine to learn only just so much of natural philosophy as is limitable exclusively to his profession. In acquiring its principles, he imbibes a power applicable to fields of social good, far beyond the limits of his peculiar vocation; and enables himself to understand and explain to others much in the everyday business of life, which, to the uneducated, must seem mysterious or paradoxical.

Although a clever man, overleaping the ordinary impediments to professional progress, may, without a good preliminary education, attain to considerable proficiency, he must be a very clever man to do it. The sense of this, induces the parents of those young gentlemen, who are destined to the profession of physic, to give them as much learning as circumstances permit, and opportunity offers. Without a good education, they well know that a student of medicine labours under great disadvantages, both as to facility and



extent of progress. They also know that, although extraordinary examples to the contrary sometimes occur, the world at large associates with a defective education the idea of professional ignorance and incapacity; that many very valuable works are published in foreign languages, and that, independently of the actual acquirements in the course of a scholastic education, the habits of attention, of arrangement, and digestion, are fertile means for medical attainments. Few thinking men, therefore, such as govern public sentiment, are willing to believe that an uneducated man can acquire or does possess as extensive or as well defined a knowledge of his profession, as one who has had the gain and the discipline of scholastic instruction. For these reasons, physicians, even in this go-ahead and hasty country, are generally much better educated than the mass of beings around them, and, if we take *science*, as well as learning, into the account, than the members of the other learned professions.

This is demonstrated daily by the press of the country, which, from the hands of physicians, teems with works on almost every possible topic.

Dr. Comstock writes on, and teaches admirably, elocution; Dr. Bird stands in the front rank of American dramatists and novelists; Dr. Standbridge composes useful works on the philosophy and practice of music; Dr. Holmes soothes his wearied professional spirit with tones of the poet's lyre, such as command the listening ear of the country, and are heard beyond the broad Atlantic; Dr. Duglison delivers to immense and delighted audiences, lectures on the instincts of animals; or instructs and amuses them with disquisitions on the curiosities of popular superstitions. Dr. Wood retires from his beautiful botanical collection, to pen an able essay on "The British Possessions in India." Some of you may have heard our colleague, Dr. Meigs, busy almost to impossibility, lecturing at the Athenian Institute, on the "Age of Augustus," and the "Siege of Jeru-



saalem," with an eloquence and interest, as though nothing else could have occupied his mind for years. Dr. Morris, whose busy life every one knows, finds time to make an excellent abridgement of the Life of Wilberforce. Dr. Benjamin Coates invents a matchless balance with one hand, while he fashions with the other a racy ode to an "Antediluvian Fossil;" and his talented brother, Dr. Reynell Coates, is just offering to the world the fruits of his extensive learning in a new journal, to be called the Literary Age. Dr. Patterson, the accomplished President of the U. S. Mint, is ever ready to disburden, for public good, his powerful mind, richly stored with the wonders of astronomy and the utilities of Natural Philosophy; while Dr. Hare, of world-renown in science applied to medicine, amuses himself and instructs others, with profound memoirs on atmospheric storms, and public currency and credit. Professor Dickson has just reached his southern home, after having delivered at Yale, the annual oration to its Alumni; a discourse of which Fame has spoken to the country. My indefatigable friend, Dr. Bell, issues in rapid succession, valuable works on baths, on health and beauty, and on the art of prolonging life; works presenting discursive knowledge of great extent and variety. Still farther from the beaten path of medicine, he wrote the lives of distinguished painters, and delivered discourses on their favourite subject to the artists of the Academy. Dr. Emerson, advancing from curious and elaborate statistics, just within the circle of medical philosophy, instructs and gratifies the class of the Franklin Institute with learned and ingenious lectures on meteorology. It is but a few days since I was absorbed in the pages of an able and interesting work, the Life of Bainbridge, the naval hero, written by Dr. Thomas Harris. If we did not now know how much has been done by the profession, for extrinsic departments of learning, we should be at a loss to conceive where the busy surgeon found time to read so much, and to write so well.



Who now thinks of a voyage round the world, without recalling to mind the rich and instructive volumes of Dr. Ruschenberger! The same gentleman stoops from the lofty field of general literature, to perform, aye, and well too, the benevolent and useful duty of forming books for schools, where the sciences are made familiar and agreeable to the young mind of the nation.

But I fear I grow tedious, not because of the worthlessness, but the very richness and prolongation of the catalogue. I will, therefore, merely allude to the travels of Mott and Gibson, the reviews of Elwyn, the musical essays of La Roche, the Siamese memoir of J. Rhea Barton, and the literary lectures of Pancoast, and Mütter, and Jackson, and Condie.

I should fail in justice to the man, and in respect for the preceptor, if I did not say something of the five large volumes of "Select Speeches, Forensic and Parliamentary," collected, arranged, and published in early life, by Dr. Chapman, the taste in the selection of which, is surpassed only by the exquisite general preface, and the pertinent, elegant, and impressive remarks, with which the editor introduces each of the many orations of the extensive collection.

Is not this a wondrous view of the learning, industry, public spirit, and talent of the profession, and does it not more than excuse the enthusiastic sage of Cos, when he declares, that "whatever really constitutes wisdom is to be found in medicine?"—(*Hippoc.*)

Not alone as writers on topics either remote from, or slightly connected with, professional pursuits, do physicians stand, as a class, distinguished, at least, in our country. They are also often conspicuous for varied accomplishments, by which they not only adorn, but serve society. There is near me a surgeon, of the highest rank in his profession, who is a good modeller, an inventive designer, a man of taste, and a promoter of everything tending to ele-



vate and refine society. I see another, who has, perhaps, in the world no superior in his art, who draws beautifully, models exquisitely, and is a master in music. Here is a botanist, there a geologist, a conchologist, a chemist, a meteorologist, a metaphysician, a politico-economist, an astronomer. The room in which I lecture, accidentally contains many professional gentlemen, each distinguished for knowledge of some one or other of the departments of general knowledge, or adorned by literary taste, or conspicuous for social accomplishments.

It is, gentlemen, when taking such a survey of the merits of the profession, that we must feel the greatest pride in it, and felicitate ourselves on being of a corps professionally so indispensable, scientifically so important, and socially so valuable to the country.\*

There are other than mere professional studies and duties to account for the lofty professional character of which I boast. Science, learning, and polish are usually in their most palmy state where civilization has been the longest, and where men are collected together in the most compacted masses. It is, therefore, in large cities that all these things can be most easily acquired. The constant friction of society insensibly confers a polish, and men are brought most frequently into active attrition, where their dwellings and business are most closely approximated. The polish, too, is most perfect, where the constant diversification of materials supplies the defects of the action of any

It will be observed, no doubt, that I have confined my personal notices chiefly to Philadelphia; and that may be to some a ground of complaint. Two reasons induced me so to do:—In the first place, Philadelphia is the most active medical point in the country; and, *therefore*, most productive of professional authorship on subjects not professional. In the second place, the enumeration must have some limit, and the local one is, perhaps, the least likely to prove offensive.



one of them. It is in the society of strangers, that we most rapidly acquire the smoothness which so well graces the sensitive chamber of physical infirmity, or moral disquietude, while diversified associations compel the self-possession which is equally important to the mental comfort of the invalid and his friends, and to the management of his disease. It is also where men can by associated enterprize carry out the expensive and multifarious business of science, that we naturally look for the chief seats of learning. In large cities are found the mechanics, who prepare the instruments of investigation and instruction. In large cities are most easily accumulated the libraries for reference, and the apparatus for research, and it is there that a multitude of contributors defray the heavy expense of scientific preparation and instruction. The explorer is not only encouraged thus, but he is able to find many advisers, numerous assistants, and a ready appreciation of his efforts. It is, therefore, scarcely to be wondered at, that men who desire the highest degree of practical knowledge, should seek it in the bosom of some vast metropolis, where the stock in trade is so great, and the facilities for its acquisition so conveniently accessible.

Now, it is a curious fact that among the trades, occupations and professions, medicine alone sends its votaries annually to the great fountain of metropolitan knowledge. Like as to a vast heart, the channels of public circulation, bring, every successive year, from every quarter of our proudly-spread country, streams of medical aspirants ; who return again a rich freight of intellectual treasure, to the unforgotten fields of kindred and friends. This mighty moral and intellectual circulation is among the richest products of the land. I waive the advantage to those who come and go, vast as it is. I overlook, for the present, the proud store of professional good poured into the recesses of the forest, carried to the sources of the distant rivers, and laid at the majestic feet of the spinal mountains of the con-



continent. I will not even insist on the civilizing effect of a never failing contact with the great centre of refinement. But I will declare that the political value of this circulation is far above them all. It may at first view seem rather startling to say so; but let us go into the account, and, as the merchants say, strike a balance.

It cannot be denied that our happy country is tied together solely by the *force of opinion*. We have here, thank God, no other fetters than the golden chains of patriotic fellowship. It is because the men of the north, and of the south, and of the west, agree to look upon each other as countrymen, that we are an undivided people, though spread over an almost measureless territory, and inhabiting climates of the greatest dissimilarity. The hewer of granite in New Hampshire, the cultivator of wheat in Pennsylvania, the raiser of hemp in Kentucky, and the planter of cotton and sugar in Louisiana, claim as a common right, the principles of the Declaration of Independence, and look proudly up to the stars and stripes which waved at Yorktown.

The stranger who traverses our vast country, is forcibly struck with the great uniformity of our manners and language. In England the people of adjacent counties scarcely understand each other, though professing alike, to speak the English language. The field labourer of Lancashire has a dialect which confounds the agriculturist of Yorkshire; and either would be puzzled to translate into common English, the peculiarities of the man of Somersetshire. It is so, also, in France, where the lower orders, as they there choose to call the peasantry and the artizans, speak such a diverse *patois*, in different districts, as to confound the ear of a Parisian. Nothing, therefore, more surprises the traveller, than the absence of a marked or unintelligible *patois* in any part of our country. It is true that we have German settlements, where they speak Dutch, French set-



lements, where the oral language is French; and Irish and Scotch districts, where those who relish a rich brogue, or a Doric dialect, may be thoroughly indulged. But English, when spoken by Americans, is always intelligible to Englishmen, whether they hear it in Boston or Savannah, in New York or Nachitoches. While much of this uniformity depends on the fact, that the early settlers in our country were educated men, and men who strove hard to give to their children the precious boon of scholastic instruction, yet, that our English should have stood so long pure against the corrupting influence of example imported from all nations, and of time and carelessness on our own part, can only be explained by supposing that the resort of students of all kinds, but especially of medical students, to the great common centres of learning, has in no small degree contributed to a result otherwise totally unintelligible. In the same way we may explain the unusual uniformity of manners and habits, so often commented on by foreigners, favourably or unfavourably, according to their taste or caprice.

Now I hold that of all the bonds of union by which a people, so diffusely spread as we are, can be kept united, none is more potent than the sameness of language and manners. It makes intercourse easy and agreeable, it promotes good fellowship, and it creates an almost instinctive horror of disseverance. The disruption would be as of one family, whose taste and sentiment, and language and manners are in kindly unison.

Of all men the physician enjoys the best opportunity of disseminating his sentiments, and conveying his example. He visits every family. He converses with the women and children, and domestics; and the more wild and remote his field of labour, the more frequently and the longer is he thrown into their society. He is not confined, like the lawyer to his court, or to contact with men, or like the clergyman, to the pulpit or the rare visitation. He is often



almost domesticated; he is looked up to confidingly, and he is considered as competent authority in most of the things that usually interest a domestic circle. His opportunity, therefore, of impressing his manners and habits and language on the people is unparralleled.

Stored with science, and learning accumulated both at classical seminaries and schools of medicine, the educated physician is usually disposed to contribute a portion of his knowledge to the benefit of his own little community. He therefore is, both from capacity and disposition, foremost in promoting the literary enterprize of his district. How few lyceums are built up or carried forward without his agency. Few weeks pass without an application to me to deliver a lecture in some near or distant lyceum; and it rarely happens that the invitation is not brought or sent by some liberal physician, who not only teaches himself, but solicits aid from others. Giving as much credit to other professions as is their due, we must admit that in this, as in a thousand ways, the American faculty of medicine, by making uniform our manners, enlightening our sentiments, and invigorating our reason, adds immensely to public security and public union.

There are many other topics favourable to the medical character, in its extra-professional usefulness and importance, which I might here perhaps advantageously discuss; but I am reminded, that an Introductory should not be long, and I have yet to make to you the practical application of what has already been said.

Seeing the immense utility of knowledge so acquired and so distributed, the student of medicine, who at much expense, and often at the cost of much inconvenience, repairs hitherward for education, cannot but feel under the most important responsibilities, to his parents, his friends, his community, and the community at large.

For the first time perhaps in his life, he separates himself from the home of his childhood. At least, for the first time,



he is entrusted, for a season, with the exclusive and independent management of his own concerns; and feels only that general accountability, which all must feel who know, that there are in the world kind hearts to be gratified by success and virtue, or to be wounded by failure or misconduct. Much, gentlemen, is due from you, to those who look from many a distant home for the news of your progress. They who watched over the helplessness of your infancy, delighted in the prattle of your childhood, directed your boyhood by sound precept and lofty example, who saw you, with commendable pride and affectionate pleasure, ripen into the beginning of a noble manhood; they who soothed your sorrows and redoubled your enjoyments; who bore for you without a murmur, the troubles and expenses of a reputable education; they, with anxious eyes and beating hearts, watch your more perilous course on the untried ocean of independent action. They hope, oh how earnestly, for the first assurance that your little bark, freighted with the rich, the priceless gems of so much domestic happiness, sits well on the sea of life, and bears without a started seam, or a riven sail, the novel tempests of time and chance. May I not, my young friends, promise them for you, that, come what may, the purity and principle, sought in many a prayer, and enriched with heartfelt blessings at your departure, will not return to them, stained by misconduct, impaired by neglect, or abated by corruption. May I not tell them that, like the gem which is entrusted to the skilful lapidary, *their jewels* will be only more polished, more brilliant, and more useful. May I not assure them, that, in confiding to you the most precious of their stores, *your own happiness*, they shall not be disappointed; that you will hold their trust in the most sacred regard, and, if not for your own sakes, at least for theirs, return to them all that a mother's love could hope, all that a father's pride would promise.

Few, if any of you, gentlemen, is without a friend. Friendship is the name among the virtues the dearest to the heart of



youth. Friend, with you, means much more than is understood by the world. *Your* friend is not a mere business convenience, some one to lend money, when it is wanted, and to frown when it is not speedily returned. He is not the mere murderer of time, who serves to pass away an idle hour for you, and then perform the same kind of office for others. He is not the flatterer of your foibles, or the glosser of your faults. He does not love you for his convenience, or his interest, or his pleasure; no! he is one who loves you for *your* sake, not his own; who would be pained at perceiving in you a blemish, who would earnestly enjoy your victories over your own passions, and your triumphs in the great field of human action, and who would despise himself, if he failed to point out to you your errors. Many such friends, I trust, are among the scenes you have left, awaiting your return, to rejoice in your improvement, or to sorrow at your defeat. Let them not sorrow! Resolve now, here, at the very threshold of your scholastic enterprise, to gratify them by your progress, and delight them with your final triumph. May it be such as will meet even the largest hopes of the most partial of friends!

The little communities from which you come have claims on each of you. That is a debt of honour, more sacred than the debt of trade. Most of you issue from the bosom of some rural district, or some distant town or village, the place of your birth, the scene of your childhood, and the ripener of your manhood. As there is no place like home, so there are no obligations like those we owe to the place of our nativity and education. It is not easy to fully appreciate our debt to our district. We have imbibed its tone, we have learned its dialect, we have received from it our sentiments, our morals and our manners. What would you be, gentlemen, if you came not hither in these borrowed goods? You have been silently, surely and fully educated in the thousand nameless things that make up the sum of your civilization, *by your community*. But for that, you



would be as the Botacooda or the Hottentot. All the learning of the schools never alone makes a man civilized, or moral, or agreeable. For the *charms* of life he must thank his home. It is there that he acquires that common sense, and knowledge of human nature, which scholastic lore never conveys. The love of home, therefore, is not that unmeaning instinct or childish prejudice, which we so commonly believe it to be. It is a grand comprehensive gratitude for unspeakable benefits, for priceless gifts, freely given, and never remembered against us. A measureless good for which no return is ever demanded. But to the generous mind, the very delicacy and munificence of the boon is its greatest charm, and the desire to return the good grows with the disinclination to set it as a debt against us. I am sure you will unite with me, therefore, in the assertion that there are few things so sacred as the unclaimed debt due to those from whom we derive the superiority that we enjoy over most of the human beings who now inhabit the earth.

But how, gentlemen, are you to repay the debt? In what way, I seem to hear you ask, can we return such a load of obligation? It is easy to do!—what they did for you, do you for others. It may not be either your lot or your duty to return to the spot in which you were born. You may be placed in some distant quarter of your own land, you may reside on a foreign soil, or, in the service of your country, you may float from port to port, sojourners on the world of waters. No matter where!—you have still that debt to pay to some one; and if you cannot send it home, it is like the charity of the truly benevolent, well repaid, if given to those who need it again, ANYWHERE. But every fair debt implies an interest. You must, to stand well with yourselves, give back not only that which you received, but more. You must not be content to leave the car which conveyed you onward, without repair or improvement. No, gentlemen, you must carry home or else-



where, something to add to the comfort, the convenience, the honour, or the progress of society. As students of medicine you have for this purpose a noble opportunity. The dignified profession to which you aspire cannot be adequately reached without the acquisition of much that may be used for more than professional purposes. You have the opportunity of cultivating yourselves, not only for the field of useful business-labour, but you must learn much that may be of great value to those among whom you will reside. The scientific part is sufficiently obvious; but there are, in all great cities, a thousand things, the notice of which will not trench seriously on your time, while it will refresh your minds, and give exercise to your bodies. These things will prove at home both agreeable and instructive. The workshops of the artists and artisans are here always open to well-bred strangers,—the Academy of Fine Arts contains specimens from many of the great masters,—the exhibitions of the Agricultural Society, the Franklin Institute and the Horticultural Society, are useful displays of the wonders of nature and the resources of art. There are great public cabinets of minerals, useful collections of natural history, and extensive libraries liberally open to the use and inspection of strangers. Do not suppose that in thus improving your minds beyond the common precincts of medicine, you will make a worse doctor, while you compound a better citizen. Our noble art takes advantage of every idea. All knowledge belongs to its boundless domain, and for the moral or the physical treatment of disease, what is there that may not be made available. But I press these things for other purposes. The arrival in any place, and especially in small or remote places, of a well-bred, intelligent, cultivated physician, is a good whose true value can be counted only by Him who sees all the present, and looks into all the future. His language, his manners, his morals, his science, his learning, elevate and refine, while his public spirit, and his disinterested public services, give a new impulse to the whole



community. If it were not indelicate to allude to men who, though thus doing, shun the applause of men, I could enumerate a bright host worthy of all commendation for private virtues and public utility. They are happily alive; but there is one who is gone, whom I may now eulogise without the fear of offending his refined delicacy, or startling his unaffected modesty.

In the beautiful valley which spreads its fertile bosom from the Blue Ridge to the Alleghany, lived a physician of no common character. Almost in sight of the station from which Jefferson surveyed the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah, lay his residence and his district. And as far as the eye, from the loftiest pinnacle of the Blue Ridge, could sweep that grand landscape, he was known and honoured as the friend of the poor, the delight of the rich, the welcomed of the children, and the hope and stay of the sick and the afflicted. Of a noble and portly person, his countenance dignified by lofty features, and his expansive forehead descriptive of a large and liberal intelligence, he might, when his face was in repose, be taken for one of too elevated a character for the common pursuits or ordinary sympathies of his race. But when he smiled, the flash of benevolence almost startled you. It was as if the statue of Jupiter Tonans should instantly transform itself into that of the recording angel whose delight it is to blot out the tale of a good man's error. However high his intellectual nature, his heart beat responsively to the hearts of his friends. And who was not his friend! Enlightened by a highly liberal education, he was ever foremost to use it for the promotion of every scheme of public or private improvement. Nothing that tended to the moral and intellectual elevation of the place and the people around him, was forgotten or neglected. Whether it was to introduce a new implement of agriculture, or more profitable descriptions of grain, or to heighten the beauty of the gardens with finer flowers, or to enrich the orchards with better fruits, he



never lost sight of the opportunity presented by the passing stranger, or the fortunate incident, to learn or obtain something to make some one smile, or to promote some one's interest. So, as his books, for he was a great lover of books, came to his library, he gave them always such a direction as he thought most for the pleasure or profit of his neighbours. He not only did this, but he was constantly the bearer of some agricultural or literary good, from him who possessed, to him who should possess it. He did not travel from house to house, and from patient to patient, for the sole purpose of professional action or gain. No! He was also charged, at his own request, with something useful in the common walks of life, so that his progress was like that of the Thames, so exquisitely pictured in Sir John Denham's "Cooper's Hill:"

"But god-like his *unwearied* bounty flows,  
First loves to do, then loves the good he does."

Yes, he loved to do good for the sake of the good, and he loved the more the people whom he served, because he had served them.

And they returned his affection, for it was disinterested. No one saw the claim for services, such as these, written on his countenance. Far otherwise! They whom he most served he was foremost to serve again, without once thinking of the already long list of obligations. His business was to do good, not to look for its return: and, let me tell you, gentlemen, that the secret of gratitude lies in that point. He who does not expect it, is almost sure to receive it. A man when he sees that something is expected, before he has it in his power to afford it, naturally feels constraint and wounded pride, and coupling these feelings with the presence of his benefactor, learns to dislike him, and to undervalue the benefits received. Wrong as this is, it is human nature; and we may learn from it the useful and graceful lesson, of either ceasing to look for a recipro-



cation of favours, of concealing the expectation, if it cannot be cancelled. The physician of whom I am speaking, never knew that expectation, as applied to individuals; nor was it necessary to do so in the warm and generous community of which he formed so important a part. Every one was his friend; and I think I may safely say, that, though an active, enterprising, and successful practitioner, he died without leaving an enemy behind, either in or out of the profession.

One of his favourite methods of doing good, was to select from among the youth of his precinct, those whom he thought likely to do credit to themselves and his beloved art, and carefully train them up to the profession of medicine. When qualified to enter the *arena* of duty, he advised them as to a choice of a place of business, introduced them, if near him, to their neighbours, and at the expense of an immediate loss to himself, requested them to give the young aspirants for employment their countenance and support. In this way, he drew closely around him a circle of well educated and useful physicians, many of whom walk in his footsteps and emulate his illustrious example. Unquestionably some now hear me who can testify to *his* value and *their* worth.

The effect of such a man on the well being of a rural district, or a country town, admits scarcely of a calculation. It is inappreciable by any rule of worldly arithmetic; for the moral and intellectual good of such example and such precept, is not of the nature of physical gain. It is, as the Algebraists say, a quantity incomparable with any mere mass of dollars and cents.

That his neighbours understood this, is made obvious by one of the most extraordinary events in the annals of medical biography. When ill health and declining years left the Doctor almost helpless, and his finances, too often neglected, were found to be slender, the clerkship of the county became vacant; which, according to immemorial



usage, should be given, by the Bench of Magistrates, to one of their own number, conversant with the law. But the Doctor was old, and poor, and beloved, and the clerkship would make him comfortable, even if a deputy were paid for doing the duties of the office. Most of the men, and all the women of the county were soon in motion to secure his election; and, to his utter surprize, the Doctor not only saw himself in an office of the law, at the instance of the people whom alone it concerned, but he was compelled, almost against his will, to retain it; which he did until his death. A stranger, I am told, might have mistaken the universal burst of satisfaction for the expression of joy for some great political or military triumph. *Such is the reward of virtue.*

After his death, the physicians of that great valley, from the Potomac to Staunton, met to record in common, their respect for his memory, and their sorrow for his loss. They resolved that the fine example of public and private virtue should not be lost to society. They therefore selected one of their number to compose his eulogium, and contributed funds to erect a noble monument, on which is to be inscribed the name and services of SAMUEL JOHNSON CRAMER, OF JEFFERSON.

Although I will not say that

“ We have lost,  
In him, more than the widow'd world can boast,”

I may declare that, while our beloved country hides, in many a modest retreat, spirits of the same honoured class, he was a man whose example may well invite the young profession to the path of useful virtue. May none of you, my young friends, do less than he for the cause of your districts; and may you all reap as rich a reward of honour and affection.



If the claims of kindred, and friends, and home, are so imperative upon a class of men who owe so much to kindred, and friends, and home, what should be the demand of the country, the nation, to which we stand indebted for the principles of civil and religious liberty, the institutions of learning, and the glory shed on us by the mighty dead, who, in every avenue of fame, have filled up the measure of our country's honour? Most of all do we stand indebted, as a class, to the dearly purchased spirit of unfettered inquiry, for the achievements and lofty character of the great men who, in our own profession, have acquired the applause of the world, and raised the professional character so high as to dignify every physician who does not himself sully the brilliant heritage. The great lesson has not been lost to their successors. I say with exultation, that if the force of events, and the ascendancy of evil councils and malign spirits, have thrown a momentary shade over the brightness of our country's honour, the faculty of medicine, as a class, has not ceased to follow steadfastly and immaculately in the clear pathway of their fathers' noble, noble example. The incitements of wealth, the blandishments of pleasure, the temptings of power, have not seduced them from the precincts of honour and duty. They, at least, have kept their eyes on the temple of truth, and fought their way to its holy entrance with a valor and constancy worthy of the cause, and consistent with the true principles of professional and patriotic honour.

It remains for you, gentlemen, who come into the field of medicine at a time when everything presages danger to the interest and honour of the republic, to redeem even more than your share of that honour and interest. Let it be said, that amidst declining morals, and waning patriotism, and fading reputation, there remains at least one great class to carry aloft and in triumph, the standard of the country's greatness, the banner of the country's honour,



the pennon of the country's good. How! Come, shades of the mighty dead! Come, bright exemplars of truth and honour, tell to these, as ye have told to us, the undying lesson!







